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MIGRATORY WORKERS IN THE UNITED STATES.

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THE NEED FOR LARGE NUMBERS OF FARM WORKERS FOR SHORT PERIODS DURING THE CULTIVATION AND HARVESTING OF CROPS IN WIDELY SEPARATED AREAS RESULTS IN A MIGRATORY WORK FORCE OF APPROXIMATELY 400,000 PERSONS EACH YEAR. MIGRANTS ARE EMPLOYED TO AVOID LOSSES OF PERISHABLE CROPS IN THE FIELDS, TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF GOOD WEATHER OR TO FORESTALL LOSSES DUE TO BAD WEATHER, AND TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FAVORABLE MARKET CONDITIONS. WORKERS MIGRATE PRIMARILY FOR ECONOMIC REASONS AND WITHDRAW FROM THE MIGRATORY SYSTEM WHEN OPPORTUNITIES FOR STEADIER EMPLOYMENT BECOME AVAILABLE. OF THE 386,000 MIGRATORY WORKERS EMPLOYED IN 1964, NEARLY THREE-FOURTHS WERE MEN, AND THREE-FIFTHS OF THE TOTAL WERE UNDER 35 YEARS OF AGE. MIGRANTS WORKED AN AVERAGE OF 131 DAYS AT FARM AND NONFARM WORK AND EARNED AN AVERAGE OF $1,240 ANNUALLY. THREE PRINCIPAL MIGRATORY STREAMS EACH YEAR ARE THE EASTERN SEABOARD, THE MID-CONTINENT, AND THE WEST COAST. WORK CREWS ARE EITHER CENTERED AROUND ONE OR MORE FAMILIES OFTEN RELATED TO THE CREW LEADER OR COMPOSED OF UNRELATED INDIVIDUALS RECRUITED BY THE CREW LEADER. NO ONE PATTERN IS FOLLOWED BY MIGRANTS IN SCHEDULING WORK WITH EMPLOYERS. SOME LAWS AFFECTING MIGRANTS ARE THE MIGRANT HEALTH ACT, MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING ACT, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT, HOUSING ACT, AND FARM LABOR CONTRACTOR REGISTRATION ACT. THIS DOCUMENT APPEARED IN "FARM LABOR DEVELOPMENTS," OCTOBER 1965. (WB)

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MIGRATORY WORKERS IN THE UNITED STATES

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In recent years, public attention has been drawn to the problems of migratory workers by nationwide publicity in news media, by the work of numerous public and private agencies interested in helping migrants, and by the introduction in Congress of several proposals for alleviating their problems. This year, interest in migrants as a source of labor supply has increased because of the termination of Public Law 78. A number of recent studies provide valuable insight into the working and living conditions of migrants and their reasons for seeking work outside their home communities.

Characteristics and Earnings

Large-scale migration of farmworkers from State to State began around the turn of the century, and by World War I migrants had become a significant part of the farm work force. At first, migrants were single men who followed the grain harvest in the Middle West and the fruit harvest on the West Coast. Later, the migratory group came to include other family members, both workers and nonworking dependents. In recent years, the number of migrant workers has remained fairly constant at approximately 400,000.

Migratory farmworkers are defined as (a) persons who have left their homes overnight to do farm wagework in another county with expectation of returning home, or (b) persons who have no usual place of residence and who do farm wagework in two or more counties. Some 386,000 persons were migratory farmworkers at one time or another in 1964. 1/ They comprised more than one-tenth of the total U.S. hired farm work force. Of these 386,000 workers, 272,000 had more than a casual attachment to farm wagework, doing 25 or more days of this work during the year.

Nearly three-quarters of the 386,000 migratory workers in the U.S. in 1964 were men and three-fifths of the total were under 35 years of age. In 1964, migrants worked an average of 131 days at farm and nonfarm work and earned an average of $1,240 for the year. Forty-four percent of all migrants did both farm and nonfarm work during the year, earning

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1/ "The Hired Farm Working Force of 1964," Agricultural Economic Report No. 82, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, August 1965. This figure excludes foreign agricultural workers temporarily employed in the United States who had left the country before the survey was made in December 1964.

Source: Farm Labor Developments, October 1965.

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an average of $585 at farmwork and $1,049 at nonfarm work. Those who did only farm wagework earned an average of $935. About one-quarter of all migrants were nonwhite. Even though they worked an average of 151 days at farm and nonfarm work compared with 125 days worked by the white migrants, their annual earnings were only $1,104 compared with $1,281 earned by the average white migratory worker.

The migratory hired farm working force includes not only family heads but also individuals not living with their families, and wives and children who contribute to the support of their families. In 1962, there were 178,000 households headed by migratory workers. 2/ The average household consisted of 3.4 persons including 1.4 children under 18 years of age. An average of 1.6 persons per household did farm wage-work during the year. The median family income from all sources was $2,149. An estimated 47 percent of the total income of these house-holds came from farm wagework.

Need for Migrants

The need for large numbers of workers for a short period of time lies at the root of migration. Many crops develop with relatively little attention most of the season but require intense activity during some cultivation processes and, especially, during the harvest. Some crops are grown under irrigation in sparsely populated areas where local labor is not available. Employers seek to bring in migrants for the following purposes: to avoid the danger that the crop will ripen quickly and perish in the field, to take advantage of good weather or to forestall losses due to bad weather, and to take advantage of favorable market conditions.

Reasons for Migrating

It is sometimes alleged that migration is a habit or whimsey. The evidence available suggests, however, that there are pertinent economic reasons underlying the decision to migrate, and that workers withdraw from the migratory stream as they find opportunities for steadier employment elsewhere. Workers in an area of labor surplus must move to find jobs. Workers in low wage areas may be able to improve their earnings by traveling out of the area for short periods of work in better paid seasonal jobs. Other workers move from place to place stretching their periods of employment by piecing together a series of

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2/ "Characteristics of the Population of Hired Farmworker Households," Agricultural Economic Report No. 84, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, August 1965.

short-term jobs. Men may migrate to crop areas in which other members of their families can also work, thus boosting family income. The removal of marginal farmland from production, the consolidation of small family farms into more efficient commercial enterprises, and the displacement of the sharecropper system by mechanization and hired labor also prompt formerly independent farmers to become migrants. Members of minority groups, blocked from other kinds of jobs, also may turn to this alternative.

Increased earnings is the primary inducement for workers to migrate, but other considerations are important too. A survey made in Fresno, California, showed the following:

Characteristics of a Good Place to Work
Migrant Workers' Opinions
by Order of Importance 3/

Order of Preference	Single workers	Family men
First	Pay	Pay
Second	Housing	Housing
Third	Food	Length of work day
Fourth	Length of work day	Fairness
Fifth	Fairness	Foreman's interest
Sixth	Foreman's interest	Work period - weeks
Seventh	Work period -- weeks	Kind of work
Eighth	Kind of work	Incentive pay
Ninth	Foreman's directions	Foreman's directions
Tenth	Incentive pay	Travel distance
Eleventh	Travel distance	Food
Twelfth	Spare time	Spare time

Both single and family men gave the highest rating to the amount of pay, but incentive pay was rated rather low. The workers seemed unfamiliar with this term and it is possible that this characteristic was rated lower than was justified. The length of work day refers to the

3/ MacGillivary, John., "Motivation of Domestic Seasonal Farm Workers," Vegetable Crops Series 127, University of California, Davis, California, April 1963.

question of whether or not the employee wants to work more than 10 hours per day. Personal treatment, shown as "fairness" and "foreman's interest," includes intangible elements such as listening to complaints or praising the worker's achievements. "Duration of employment" was rated surprisingly low as was "travel distance." Presumably these workers remained in the area most of the season. Employment gaps due to idle periods between crops or to days lost in traveling could be very important.

The type of work to be done is often more significant than indicated in the Fresno survey. In some cases work unsuitable for children, such as picking from ladders, is avoided. Some groups of migrants avoid stoop labor or work in very hot temperatures. Avoidance of certain kinds of jobs is related not only to the arduous nature of the work, but also to the effect of ethnic prejudices on the status of the jobs. 4/

Migratory Streams

The progress of migrants across the country each year is concentrated into three principal streams--the Eastern Seaboard Stream, the Mid-continent Stream, and the West Coast Stream. Each has many subcurrents. There are also many cross currents among the major streams. In recent years, migrants have tended to strike out in new patterns in search of better jobs.

The Eastern Seaboard pattern involves workers who come from Florida and other southeastern States. Migrants move into Florida during the winter months when vegetables, sugarcane, and citrus are active and crops to the north are quiescent. Crews begin to go north early in May. Soon thereafter, crews are passing through the South Atlantic States - stopping in North Carolina, Virginia, or Maryland on their way to New York and New Jersey. A few reach New England. By the end of September, most migrants are making the return trip south, and by November, most have returned to their home communities.

The migration pattern of the Mid-continent Stream is large and complex. The home base of most of these migrants, who are primarily of Mexican descent, is southern Texas. As vegetable work is completed there, some migrants move into the Mountain and Plains States for sugarbeet cultivation. After July, most of these migrants find employment in the mid-western fruit and vegetable harvest, but many move north in combine crews to harvest wheat. Some even reach Canada. Other Texas migrants go into the fruit and vegetable harvests of the Pacific Northwest. Still

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4/ Metzler, William H., "The Farm Worker in a Changing Agriculture," Division of Agricultural Sciences, University of California, September 1964, pp. 16-17.

another movement is that of cotton choppers and cotton-harvest workers across Texas and into New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Cotton harvesting in the High Plains of Texas reaches a peak in October and November and many migrants arrange to be back in the State for this work. Increased mechanization of cotton work, especially harvesting, has reduced the magnitude of this migratory movement.

The third major movement, along the West Coast, involves employment in a great variety of fruit and vegetable activities from southern California to Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.

Composition of Crews

Crews may be centered on one or more families, with most members related to the crew leader, or they may be composed of unrelated individuals recruited by the crew leader. At times small crews will attach themselves to a larger crew. Crew leaders are generally persons of limited education but considerable intelligence and ability. Most are men, but women are not uncommon. The leader of a family crew tends to be older, more experienced, and formerly a migratory worker himself. The leader of an unrelated crew may never have been a migratory worker and may never even have worked on a farm. Some persons become leaders by inheriting an existing crew or leading away a group of dissidents. Some strike out on their own, armed with a bus and a few contacts with employers. Some are asked by employers to form a crew.

The crew leader is a middleman between the farmer and the worker. Generally a crew leader may perform some of the following functions: arrange job schedules; recruit and screen workers; provide initial financing for the travel involved and the mode of travel such as bus, truck, or car. Also, a crew leader must find replacements for those members who drop out during the trip. Frequently a crew leader with his equipment will be employed by the grower or food processor for hauling farm produce and other similar work. He may also arrange for housing, food, clothing, tobacco and other sundry items for the crew. The leader may contract for a job, paying the workers himself, or he may act as a supervisor on the job. Sometimes a crew leader will only organize a crew and, after transporting them to their employer, his job is completed. For this service the crew leader or organizer is paid a fee by the workers or the employer.

The Annual Worker Plan

There is no one travel pattern that all migrants follow. Some have a fairly definite schedule, based on contacts with previous employers, that continues year after year. Others hope to find jobs on the road,

perhaps going directly to an area of expected labor shortage or perhaps making several side trips along the way. Many workers return to their homes after working on a particular crop; others move from crop to crop over a wide area. Some travel in their own cars, singly or in small family groups. The great majority, however, combine into crews, some of which may be as large as 150 to 200 persons. Some groups hunt for jobs on their own while others seek guidance.

Many migratory workers receive schedule-planning assistance from the Department of Labor's Bureau of Employment Security and affiliated State employment security agencies through the interstate clearance program and the Annual Worker Plan. The Annual Worker Plan is one for arranging an itinerary for the crew in advance of the season by scheduling a succession of jobs. It increases the number of days of work for migrants and, at the same time, assures the farmer that workers will be available when needed.

One type of arrangement under the Annual Worker Plan is the "pooled interview." It is used in Florida and, to a lesser extent, in a few other States. Before the season begins, farm placement representatives from demand States, charged with job orders from farmers back home, meet with crew leaders in the supply States to work out a schedule of jobs for the season. They brief the crew leader on crop prospects, wage rates, working and living conditions, and other pertinent information. A similar method, used by States in the northwest, also involves recruitment and completion of work schedules by employment service representatives of the demand State. However, the recruiting is conducted by representatives of each State independently, with no contacts with representatives of other demand States. A third kind of migrant recruitment is accomplished through the extension of interstate clearance orders by demand States with actual recruitment left to representatives of the supply States. In no event are these arrangements considered compulsory for States, farmers, or workers, and no attempt is made to change private commitments that crew leaders have made.

In 1964, State employment security agencies contacted some 10,300 groups of interstate migrants from 34 States. These groups consisted of 180,800 persons of whom 50 percent were adult males, 24 percent adult females, and 26 percent were children under 16 years of age. Three-fourths of the persons in the groups contacted were workers and the remainder were dependent family members.

As the season advances, adjustments in the worker schedule become necessary to compensate for unforeseeable difficulties - for instance, an unusually early crop or widespread desertion from a crew. The farm placement representative must provide a local center of communication with flexibility to compromise, reschedule, and make new arrangements to smooth over last-minute problems.

Many States set up temporary information stations on major migrant travel routes. These offices are relocated as crop activities change. The migrant can obtain from them reliable information on weather, crop conditions, wage rates, etc., and also a map that shows harvest timetables and the most convenient routes to travel. In some offices, migrants can be referred to specific jobs. Most States publish farm labor bulletins that, in addition to other data, show labor surpluses and shortages by area. These bulletins are distributed at local employment offices and temporary information stations. In some remote communities, not regularly served by the public employment service, a volunteer placement representative - often the owner of a local store or gasoline station - takes on the job of filling farm labor orders and applications.

New Laws Affecting Migrants

Migrants, along with most other farmworkers, have been largely excluded from social legislation. In August 1959, the Subcommittee on Migratory Labor of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare was established to examine, investigate, and make a complete study of matters pertaining to migratory labor, including such problems as the wages of migratory workers, their working conditions, transportation facilities, housing, health, and educational opportunities for migrants and their children. Since that time, largely through the efforts of this subcommittee, several new laws have been enacted to promote the welfare of migratory workers.

The Migrant Health Act, enacted in 1962, authorized Public Health Service grants for a variety of projects with special emphasis on family health service clinics. These clinics, established in or near farm-labor camps, have provided medical and, in some cases, dental care for migrant families. Public health nurses have been employed to visit families in the farm-labor camps on a regular schedule. Sanitation experts have been appointed to work with the migrants themselves and with property owners to upgrade housing and environmental conditions. Health advisors have been assigned to work with the migrants to develop better understanding of good health practices. This year the original Act, which would otherwise have expired, was extended for another three years with an appropriation of $7 million for the first year, $9 million for the second year, and $11 million for the third year. The new Act provides free hospitalization for migratory workers.

Under the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962 and the Area Redevelopment Act of 1961, training is provided for unemployed and underemployed farmworkers including migrants. Recent amendments to the Manpower Development and Training Act broaden both the scope and duration of training for agriculture workers. They may now be trained for sub-professional jobs such as chemical technician or hydraulic equipment technician as well as for agriculture-related jobs. Up to 104 weeks of training is currently allowed compared with 52 weeks previously. Since 1962, over 20,000 individuals have been or are being trained in agricultural skills under MDTA and ARA programs. Some of the occupations persons have been trained for are: farm mechanics, farm equipment maintenance, gardener-groundskeeper, dairy farmhand, general farmhand, and general farming (business management and analysis). In an effort to fill the growing need for trained farmworkers to operate highly complex machinery, the Federal Government has recently adopted a regional approach in assessing occupational needs.

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 provided specifically for housing, sanitation, educational, and day-care projects for seasonal farmworkers and their families. Under the community action title of the Act, Federal support can also be given to other programs such as vocational training or counselling in home building and home management. Either public agencies or private nonprofit organizations can apply for grants and up to 90 percent of the cost of a project can be paid by the Office of Economic Opportunity. Direct loans can be made to profit-making institutions, farm associations, and individuals. As of October 1, 1965, grants totaling $22 million had been made to public and private agencies in 28 states for 63 projects including self-help housing, adult literacy education, and day-care and educational programs for several thousand migrant children.

A volunteer corps, VISTA, was established by another provision of the antipoverty legislation. The VISTA program (Volunteers in Service to America) is providing important help for migratory farm families as well as other poverty-stricken groups.

The Housing Act of 1964 provided that low-rent housing for migrants or other domestic farmworkers could be built with the assistance of Federal grants of up to two-thirds of the construction cost. Nonprofit organizations or public agencies are eligible to receive grants under the low-rent housing program which is administered by the Farmers Home Administration. The grant recipient must agree to charge rents not exceeding an approved scale, to maintain the housing in a safe and sanitary condition, and to give domestic farmworkers priority of occupancy. The original Act authorized the expenditure of $10 million for a 1-year period ending September 30, 1965. The Housing Act of 1965 amends the earlier Act by extending the period to October 1, 1969, and raising the authorized expenditure to $50 million. As of October 13, 1965, no appropriation had been made.

The refusal of Congress to extend Public Law 78, which authorized the importation of Mexican contract agricultural workers, was another legislative gain for U.S. migrants in 1964. Largely because migrants were able to obtain jobs formerly filled by foreign workers, migrant-worker employment in the first nine months of 1965 averaged 8 percent higher than corresponding 1964 levels. Higher wages have been reported this year for work in sugar beets, pickles, and other crops where migrants commonly work. These increases are related to the removal of competition from foreign workers.

The Farm Labor Contractor Registration Act 1/ which became effective January 1, 1965, was an effort to correct some of the abuses of the crew-leader system. Many crew leaders perform their functions and duties in a satisfactory and responsible manner. However, because of their dependence on the crew leader, migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse by the few who are irresponsible. According to surveys conducted by the Department of Labor, the abuses most frequently attributed to crew leaders are:

1. Overcharging for transportation - collecting travel expenses from both employers and workers or failing to live up to the agreement which was the basis of the employer's advancing travel money.

2. Production short counts - giving workers a short count or short weight on units produced, or requiring workers to overfill containers.

3. Wage fraud - under-paying workers, or collecting wages from employers and then abandoning workers without paying them, failing to pay agreed-upon wages, making improper deductions from worker's earnings, and failing to forward deductions for Old Age and Survivors' Insurance.

Other abuses reported include misrepresentation of crop conditions and anticipated earnings; overcharging for groceries and meals; illegal sale of liquor, narcotics, and gambling and other illegal activities.

1/ The provisions of the Act are described in the January 1965 issue of Farm Labor Developments.

The Act is designed to correct these abuses by:

a. Requiring crew leaders to furnish accurate information about the nature of the work and working conditions so that prospective crew members may decide whether or not they want to work for this crew leader, and

b. Revoking the licenses of crew leaders who engage in unscrupulous or illegal practices and making it illegal for crew leaders to operate without a license.

The Act is also designed to protect the safety of the migrants while they are being transported by requiring that the vehicles used for their transportation conform to ICC standards and by requiring the crew leader to carry automobile liability insurance.

The Labor Department, which is charged with administration of the law, has been devoting its efforts to acquainting crew leaders with the provisions of the law and helping them to meet the requirements for obtaining a license. As of October 15, 1965, 1,254 registration certificates and employer identification cards had been issued.

The Labor Department is also preparing forms to be filled out and signed by a representative of the company which insures the crew leader. Such a form, when properly executed and attached to a copy of the policy, will assure the Labor Department that the farm labor contractor is properly insured under the Act.